PHIL 508 – Seminar in Continental Philosophy
Fall 2014

Steven Crowell
crowell@rice.edu

Phenomenology and Metaphysics: The Problem of World

Husserl conceived phenomenology as a "transcendental" propaedeutic to metaphysics, a method for distinguishing between meaningful and meaningless questions in philosophy. Central to this method is the "bracketing" (suspension) of what is normally taken for granted. The existence of the world is one such taken for granted matter, but what is "world"? Phenomenology is supposed to help us to appreciate what is involved in asking this question, but does it also provide us with an answer? Husserl suggests one in his concept of the "Lifeworld." Taking off from there, Heidegger replicates Husserl's transcendental move: from a phenomenological investigation of the "worldhood of the world" he projects a kind of metaphysics that would provide answers to questions about (for instance) our place in nature. Subsequent phenomenologists – here represented by Günter Figal – have sought to use the problem of the relation of world to "life" as a way to bypass the transcendental distinction between phenomenology and metaphysics altogether. This course will explore these issues as a way of coming to understand what it is to philosophize phenomenologically.

Required Books

Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I,* tr. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014)

Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, tr. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970)

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row)

Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) **[pdf]**

Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, tr. William McNeill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Günter Figal, *Objectivity*, tr. Theodore George (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010)

Course Requirements

– attendance and class participation
– two short (5-7pp) papers
– one term paper (12-15pp)
– occasional written responses to the reading

Daily Readings

Aug 25: Phenomenology, Science, Metaphysics: *Ideas I* (pp. 3-7, 33-47, 48-56)
Sep 1: (**no class meeting**: Labor Day)
Sep 8: Reduction and the "Annihilation" of World: *Ideas I* (pp. 56-115)
Sep 15: The Lifeworld as the Hidden Presupposition of Philosophy: *Crisis* (pp. 103-147)
Sep 22: Science of the Lifeworld and its Paradoxes: *Crisis* (pp. 148-189)
Sep 29: Dasein and Worldhood: *Being and Time* (pp. 67-90, 91-123) **[first paper due]**
Oct 6: Metaphysical issues: *Being and Time* (pp. 123-135, 135-148, 171-175, 244-256)
Oct 13: (**no class meeting**: Mid-term)
Oct 20: Transcendence and World: "On The Essence of Ground" (pp. 97-135)

Oct 27: Transcendence and World (continued)
Nov 3: From Life to World: *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (pp. 169-366; selections) **[second paper due]**
Nov 10: From Life to World (continued)
Nov 17: From Life to World (continued)
Nov 24: World as Hermeneutic Space: *Objectivity* (pp. 121-153)
Dec 1: Metaphysics of Life: *Objectivity* (pp. 299-348; selections)
Dec 8: (make up class?)
Dec 17: **[final papers due]**

Statement on Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.